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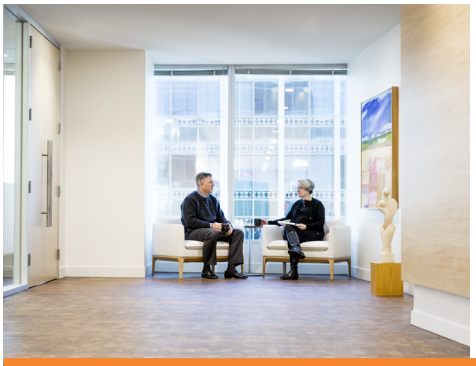

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We're All In The Game

BY RANDY STERN

You probably never heard of TJ House. That is, unless you're a serious baseball person.

In December, the former Major League Baseball pitcher came out as a gay man. He did so by announcing his engagement to his partner. That makes him the third former Major Leaguer to come out – after the late Glenn Burke and current MLB executive Billy Bean.

In the past decade or so, we witnessed a number of athletes to come out before, during, and after participating in sports. While it would be great to feature Sheryl Swoopes, Megan Rapinoe, Carl Nassib, Jason Collins, and many others who have come out as LGBTQ, we are fortunate to present former ballplayer Ila Borders in this issue.

Borders is one of many groundbreaking athletes we should be celebrating. She is why we are engaged with sports. That is why we also participate in our LGBTQ sports leagues.

There are some of us who would rather feign ignorance about sports. Even though you attended a Minnesota Wild game during their Pride Night last season, you post on your social media how much you disdain a ritual that is

Photo by Randy Stern

part of Midwest society.

However, I am proud to say that I am a sports fan. Not just the usual professional team sports, yet that was my indoctrination into being an LGBTQ sports fan.

My mother was one who introduced me to baseball.. Her history goes back to her fandom of Hank Greenberg – a hero to us of the Jewish faith who played for the Detroit Tigers in the 1930s. She took us to see my hometown Los Angeles Dodgers at Chavez Raine plenty of times. She bled Dodger Blue, alright. I didn't. Not while Tommy Lasorda was their manager.

Since I moved to this state, I rooted for our Minnesota Twins. The big reason is that, in turn, they support us. One of the prime reasons why comes from our Day In The Life subject Chelsey Falzone, who plays a huge part in the ballclub. Plus, the Twins put on one of the best Pride Nights in Major League Baseball.

I also find some comfort knowing that my other favorite teams also hold Pride Nights for their fans. These include the Wild, the WNBA's Minnesota Lynx, and Major League Soccer's Minnesota United FC. You can also add the University of Minnesota's Women's Basketball team to that list!

While we're at it, please put this on your radar: The Twin Cities is hosting the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance's Gay Softball World Series later this summer. We will have an issue dedicated to this big LGBTQ sports event in late August.

Hopefully, this gives you a taste of what to come in these following pages. For what we do in our sports leagues and in the stands, our presence is undeniable. Honor and celebrate us as we celebrate sports in this issue! ▮

Boa Constrictors, Inside and Out: Guthrie's "The Little Prince"

BY E.B. BOATNER

I wonder, if at age14 as I struggled with French irregular verbs, a grownup exhorting, "Memorize *all* the words, and by the time you're 81, you'll read French like a champ" would have cheered me up?

I rather think Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, creator of *The Little Prince*, would have mocked those grownups who live by numbers, rote memorization, and good grades. He'd reassure me that children see with the heart, that 81 is a fine time to revisit the *petit bonhomme* on his own 80th anniversary, and that the Guthrie's McGuire Proscenium Stage is an excellent place to reconnect.

Rick Cummins and John Scoullar's adaptation hews to the spirit of Saint Exupéry's slender book. On a vast and jumbled stage–The Sahara desert? The author's loft/writing space?–things and people shape-shift, creating magic from scratch.

A child can conjure a flock of birds from a single feather, or understand zooming aloft a tiny model plane while spluttering "Thhbbbbt!" mimics the fall of a doomed flight. *Petit bonhomme* is more savvy than he appears; the Aviator more childlike. The adult still bemoans his thwarted career as a famous painter when, as a child, adults in their purblind ignorance saw his first masterpiece, Boa Constrictor Digesting Elephant, and his last, The Elephant Within, as "Hats," and counseled the boy to renounce painting.

Appearing out of the desert vastness, the little prince petitions the Aviator: "Draw me a sheep," persisting until the Aviator sketches copies of his complete oeuvre: #1 and #2.

"No, no," exclaims the little fellow, "I don't want a drawing of an elephant inside a boa … Draw me a sheep!"

The aviator sketches three sheep which the little prince judges, "too old," "too sick," and, "a ram, not a sheep." The aviator next draws a rectangle with holes; a box within which, he asserts, sleeps the sheep. When the little prince fears the sheep might eat his unique Rose–with whom he has a "complicated" relationship–the aviator draws a muzzle to prevent her untimely demise.

This Rose is high-strung, demanding, manipulative, whose needs forced the little prince to flee his small kingdom. A disturbing, perhaps unkind question: why was the little prince's first souvenir a hungry herbivore?

The little prince meets various unsatisfactory denizens on other worlds, drawing wisdom and comfort primarily from a desert fox and the "moon-colored" sand serpent, his first

Earthly contact who volunteered aid, who to the prince's "You don't even have feet," countered, "I can send you further than a ship."

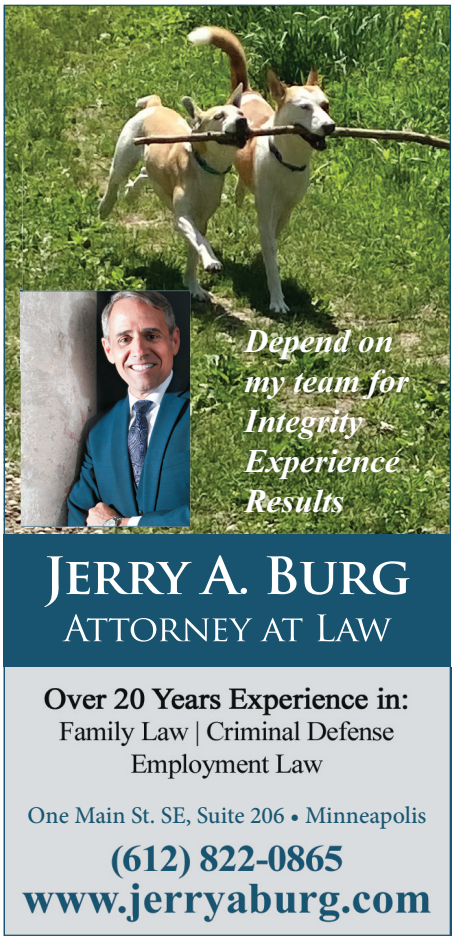
Friendship, the fox explains, involves taming and being tamed, creating indissoluble ties. "It's the time you've lost for your rose that makes your rose so important," warning, "you become responsible forever for that which you have tamed."

As water supplies dwindle, the little prince urges the Aviator to seek a well, setting out one starry night until dawn when they happen upon a veritable village stone well, complete with squeaky pulley, rope, and bucket.

Time has come to seek the serpent's aid. The little prince reassures the Aviator; "It's too far. I can't take this body. It's too heavy."

The Aviator also returns home, holding a fearsome secret: he forgot to draw a strap on the sheep's muzzle. Did it, one sunny afternoon, on a faraway tiny planet, graze on a complicated red rose?

This magic production runs through February 5 and the book will enchant, well into your ninth decade. ∎



Chelsey Falzone

BY LINDA RAINES

Where did you grow up?

Lake Elmo, Minn. I grew up a few doors down from a snow tubing hill and a cattle farm. My parents put my twin brother and I to work on building our house throughout our entire childhood, so we learned the value of hard work at an early age.

Where do you live?

Oakdale, Minn. My wife and I just purchased the home my grandma built and lived in for the last 9 years of her life. We are so blessed to be in a space to eventually allow for our future family to grow.

Who do you live with?

My wife, Becca. We got married in September 2022 so married life in our new home is wonderful!

What is your occupation?

Manager, Youth Engagement – Minnesota Twins. I've prayed that I'll get to do this work someday for the past decade. I help manage our youth baseball and softball programs, and that is an absolute dream come true for me.

When did you come out?

I sort of have been coming out to different groups of people from different areas of my life for the past 10 years. But I mark my most monumental "coming out" moment when my entire extended family came over to our family's house, where my girlfriend (now wife) and I were living at the time. I knew I couldn't run from it any longer – I was going to have to address who she was and why she was always around. I avoided coming out to my family for as long as possible out of fear of how this news may harm some of my relationships. I texted each family member minutes before they were supposed to arrive to our house to let them know they'll be meeting my girlfriend. In hindsight, probably bad timing… but perhaps it was perfect timing!

How'd that go?

That part went amazingly well. Every single one of them responded with love and acceptance. However, that wasn't the case for my coming out to my parents some months prior to that. Truthfully, however, because my parents have evolved so much since then, I don't like talking about how they handled that situation. To put it briefly, it was horrible. Absolutely devastating for me. But my parents have evolved so much since then and no longer hold onto the beliefs they once held. They love my wife deeply and support us more than I could ever imagine. They happily walked me down the aisle later last year. They show unconditional love for us, and they have treated my wife as their very own daughter. I know that's not the story for everyone.

When do you wake up?

About 6:00 AM with an alarm, and literally 7:20 AM every time I don't set an alarm. I'm programmed to start the day and get stuff done. It can be so annoying!

Phone alarm or old school alarm?

Phone alarm. Hey, back in the day when the power went out overnight, we'd miss the school bus because the alarm would reset! Can't risk that anymore.

What's the first thing you do in the morning?

Pour coffee, then shuffle to the living room floor to stretch. Both are a MUST.

Breakfast?

I could eat breakfast three times a day. I usually have a homemade ham, egg and cheese breakfast sandwich, or Eggo waffles.

Coffee?

Definitely! It's ritualistic. Our favorite is Velvet Hammer, roasted near Rochester, Minn. We keep trying to find one we like better (why do we do that?!), but it's impossible.

Cream or no?

Coffee Mate French Vanilla creamer. I like sugar!!!

How do you spend your commute?

It depends on my current stress/anxiety levels. It's old school country music if I'm feeling calm. If I'm stressed or anxious about the day, I'll listen to Christian hip hop/rap, which is amazingly underrated and misunderstood. And if I'm actually feeling productive and on top of my life (not often), I'll listen to an audiobook or leadership podcast. But most of the time, it's some classic country. Or, Brandi Carlile – because, duh!

What do you nerd out for (gaming, music, history, etc.)?

Baseball and biblical studies.

What music have you been digging lately?

Classic country, Americana, and Christian rap.

Is your work space tidy or a hot mess?

When people tell me they walk past my workspace, they usually raise their eyebrows because they're passive-aggressively telling me they noticed it's a mess. It's a hot mess, okay? But it's all work stuff! We have bobbleheads, hats, jerseys, baseball/softball equipment… and very little storage. My workspace is a mess.

What's been your favorite job?

Manager, Youth Engagement – Minnesota Twins (current role!). I've really loved each of my roles with the Minnesota Twins for similar and different reasons. I've needed each one of them to make me the person I am today, so I'm thankful for the places I've stopped along the way to my current role. I always say "Embrace your place!" Embracing my place has helped me appreciate each role, and is undoubtedly the reason I've been trusted with my current role.

Favorite weeknight meal: Go out, take out, or cook in?

Breakfast for dinner! All I need is some chocolate chip Eggo waffles. I really don't cook well so I probably shouldn't comment much on this topic! My wife tends to say "you get what you get and don't throw a fit!" She's an amazing cook; and she makes it look so easy, which I admire. Cooking stresses me out a lot, but I am REALLY good at doing the dishes!

On a usual weeknight, you are doing what?

Probably stressing out about the next day. Jeez, don't do as I do. But to provide a less dramatic answer, probably being a boring responsible homeowner and tidying the house and doing yard work. Sometimes, though, I'll

feel adventurous and hit up a restaurant with some friends/coworkers.

Bedtime?

Usually around 11:30 PM which is much later than I'd like. I really love my sleep, and I'd prefer more of it!

Favorite weekend activity?

Going over to my parent's house with my wife to hang with my mom and dad. I love chatting on the deck before having a bonfire to burn brush for my dad. I feel like my world slows down when I'm with them, which is so comforting to me.

Photos courtesy of Chelsey Falzone

What are you most proud of, and why?

I'm proud that I've maintained my faith in God through a rough and complicated journey of finding my identity as a gay woman. It's no secret so many people leave the church – and rightfully so – at some point during their discovery. I completely get it. And I haven't figured it out because there are still a lot of things that trigger me or really upset me about the church, but I know Jesus is my Lord and Savior and I'm super proud I've held onto my faith. It hasn't always been easy, or clear what I should do or what I believe. But, my mission on this side of eternity is and has always been the same and that's to glorify God. Additionally, I'm so proud that I get to represent the Minnesota Twins to communities all over Twins Territory. I appreciate the weight of this calling, and I'm honored to do this work.

Words of wisdom to share:

I just asked my wife what I should say here, and she said, "Don't half-ass anything," just as I was saying, "how about the verse, 'God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to his purpose.'" *Romans 8:28*. Haha! Both are true. To put it simply: love people deeply, be kind to everyone, let yourself be vulnerable, wear your heart on your sleeve, and be secure in your identity. Life is sweeter and richer when we allow ourselves to fully live. ∎

Scallops with Orange Sauce. Coconut, Chocolate, Banana, Whipped Cream Crepe. Photos by Mike Hnida

In-Vince-able

BY CARLA WALDEMAR

A few days ago, I found myself seated across the aisle from United States Senator Amy Klobuchar: a woman of good taste—as far as dining choices go. We'd independently decided that Chloe was THE hot, new restaurant at which to secure a seat, soon after its long-awaited opening. It's the baby of Chef Vincent Francoual, who, indeed, has named his new digs after his other new baby, toddler Chloe.

Yes, *that* Vincent: the one who drew throngs of foodies to his former, self-named kitchen on the Nicollet Mall across from Orchestra Hall. Performance nights, it was filled with the world's musical virtuosi and their followers …. and the rest of the time, by Francophile foodies—which is, just about everyone.

This round, Chloe anchors a hotel near the stadium, ready to serve Vikings fans as well as fans of French bistro cooking. Aficionados of

Continue on page 14

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This Page: Steak Tartare, Dining Room, As You Wish Cocktail. **Opposit Page:** Duck Pate

either stripe will find the famous Vincent burger a fine introduction to his style of delivering pleasure on a plate. It's fabricated of pulled short rib mixed with ground beef, harboring a molten lode of smoked Gouda cheese. The plump patty is set upon a rich egg bun, sauced with cornichons (that's French for crispy pickles) and served up with (he's no dummy) a pile of frites ($19).

The room, which once housed a concept called Bacon, glows with a wall bold with teal, near which low booths of gray and pink invite guests to sit back and place a cocktail order. Plentiful bar seating, too.

Begin your meal with an app from a list of *petites assiettes* (aka starters), starting with a baguette, $8—in a break from French tradition, wherein it's gratis (well, included in the service charge). Choose the onion soup our fine server recommended; escargot, poutine, an Alsatian pizza-like tart; or our choice, duck pate ($12-16).

It comes with baguette slices (so you'll find you didn't need to order one)—along with dabs of Dijon mustard and apricot relish: worthy sidekicks for slabs of pate. They proved lighter in both flavor and texture than those of the robust, rustic school.

Steak tartare is listed as a *plat principal* (main), but, in its smaller option ($15), it served as our second starter, and a tasty one it was. Don't miss it! The sweet, burly raw beef has been roughly hand-chopped, then spruced up with cornichons, capers, shallots and chives. An egg yolk, lazing in its shell, begs you to whisk it into the concoction and spoon some on more slices of baguette. "What makes it so red?" my friend wondered, before reading the menu's fine print, which confesses to "um, a wee bit of ketchup." *Vive la France*!

A quintet of shareable salads is on offer (most $12-19). We dove into the number called Vosgiennes, which stars Belgian endive tossed with bits of potato and apple (smart partnering on the kitchen's part) in an overly abundant (and oily) bacon vinaigrette. (I'd vote for bacon lardons

instead, perhaps.) Or choose the Nicoise, beet, or garden greens.

Now to summon our main—a harder decision, for sure. There's a trio of galettes (buckwheat crepes, $15); La Table de Famille, a family-style serving of what *grand-mère* might be cooking (this evening, steak au poivre with potatoes and haricots, $51); a listing under Plat Principal (mains, $18 for skate wing to $38 for cassoulet). It tempts your taste buds with the likes of beef bourguignon, steak frites, calves' liver and chicken fricassee. Or glance again at the menu to discover Once upon a Time, aka an homage to Vincent in the good old days.

And that's where we ended up, ordering the Vincent burger and the famous scallops with orange sauce ($33). (Turns out, we didn't have room for the burger. Next time.) Those scallops had been seared over high heat until crusty (and salty!) on one side, then left a shimmering and nubile ivory beyond. But that crusting provided an overpowering taste that prevailed over the critter's innate delicacy—too bad. Lots of citrusy orange sauce moistened the fingerling coins and leaves of leeks which completed the plate.

Dessert? *Mais oui, merci*. Summon a crepe with scads of topping from which to choose ($8). Or find a fave among the classics on offer ($10): floating island, or Vincent's childhood favorite (and soon to be baby Chloe's, he deems): vanilla ice cream, madeleines and chocolate sauce. Or make the choice a confirmed glutton would (therefore, count moi in): a triple presentation of traditional sweet conclusions: crème brulee, chocolate pot de crème and crème caramel. Trust me, they're the best bistro fare on offer, and in the kitchen of Chloe, they succeed.

We sipped the last of our wine (BTG French labels $10-18), layered on our winter gear, said goodbye to Amy and, fat and happy, headed out into the night. ▮

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Pride Journey
Jacksonville, Florida

BY JOEY AMATO

Photos courtesy of Joey Amato

The last time I visited Jacksonville, I was probably in my early-mid 20s and living in Orlando. It was a very long time ago. I was eager to visit again as I know much has changed in the city since the early 2000s. If you are ever planning on visiting Jacksonville, I would highly recommend renting a car. Jacksonville is the largest city in the country by land mass and many of its popular attractions are spread out, especially if you want to get a good idea of all the city has to offer.

I decided to stay downtown for this trip as much of my itinerary was within a few miles of city center. The Residence Inn Downtown Jacksonville is a beautiful property located within walking distance to some of the city's attractions, great restaurants, and a block from one of Jacksonville's popular LGBTQ nightlife spots, Incahoots. The bar offers some incredible drink specials so be sure to check their social media before you go so you can capitalize on those. It is also the place to catch a fabulous drag show while in town.

I wanted to make the focus of this trip about budget travel. Many times, people tend to not visit certain destinations, or travel at all, because they think it isn't affordable. Before setting out on my Jacksonville adventure, I did some research and discovered some restaurants and attractions that are not only affordable, but also some of the highest recommended in the city.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and the Residence Inn offers a complimentary breakfast for guests, but if you are in the mood to try out a local breakfast spot, head to Cool Moose Cafe. I met my friend there and we both had a delicious meal for around $10. Everything was scratch made and the service was wonderful.

Next, head over to the Cummer Museum of Art, which offers free admission on the first Saturday of each month. I visit so many art museums that sometimes they can become monotonous, but this museum happened to be exhibiting two very cool exhibitions during my visit. The first was The Age of Armor, an incredible collection of dozens of pieces of armor dating back hundreds of years. Most of the pieces in the collection were of European descent but there were a few pieces from other civilizations.

Another interested exhibition is a display of movie posters from Norman Studios. Jacksonville was the filmmaking hotspot prior to Hollywood with 26 movie companies calling Jacksonville home during the silent movie era. In the earliest years, Black actors and actresses were only cast as extras in films, which were mostly catering to white audiences. Richard Norman purchased the Eagles Studio complex and went on to create one of the top production companies featuring prominently

Black cast members. Unfortunately, Norman was forced to close his studio during the Great Depression, but his legacy can be seen in this wonderful exhibition at the museum. The Norman Studio building itself is the last known silent film studio still standing in Jacksonville and efforts are underway to make it into a museum.

For a quick lunch, head over to Arepa Please, just a few blocks from the museum. Try their signature Pabellon arepa which contains shredded beef, sweet plantains, queso blanco, and black beans. It was delicious and filling but didn't break the bank.

I always like to visit local art galleries when I travel. On the way out to Jacksonville Beach is Gallery 725, one of the top galleries in the city. The gallery was showcasing the works of late animator Ron Campbell which included artworks based on the Beatles' Yellow Submarine and the Beatles Saturday Morning TV Cartoon Series as well as Scooby Doo, Smurfs, Rugrats, Jetsons, and Flintstones. The gallery also features works from internationally renowned pop artists Peter Max and Roy Lichtenstein among other artists.

Jacksonville's beaches are beautiful and not as crowded as South Florida's so I would recommend spending the morning or afternoon exploring the area which also includes Atlantic Beach and Neptune Beach. You'll find a ton of wonderful seafood restaurants in the area as well.

The highlight of my trip was a visit to Catty Shack Wildlife Sanctuary, which provides a safe, loving and forever home to endangered big cats. The sanctuary's mission is to educate the public about their plight in the wild and in captivity. The sanctuary is home to a variety of big cats, but the majority of the residents are tigers. While most of them have their own individual space, the siblings share an enclosure.

I was most intrigued by the black leopard. I don't think I've ever seen one before. Khala Hala was born at Catty Shack Ranch on June 16, 2004. She was happily positioned on her perch and made eye contact with every visitor who passed by her enclosure.

Catty Shack is undergoing a large expansion which will include some additional large enclosures to give the cats more room to roam and play.

If you are in the mood to do some shopping during your stay, head to St. Johns Town Center, a beautiful outdoor shopping experience featuring a variety of retailers ranging from Tiffany and Louis Vuitton to Pottery Barn and Restoration Hardware. There are many dining options available there including a great Mediterranean fast-causal chain called Cava, but if you are looking for a local option, head back downtown and try S & R Dim Sum, which is located not too far from Memorial Park. I

ordered the shrimp dim sum as well as the sweet and sour chicken and both were wonderful. I especially liked the chicken dish as it was only lightly breaded and sauteed rather than deep fried like in other Chinese restaurants.

For one last cocktail in Jacksonville, head to Park Place Lounge, just a short 5-minute drive from downtown. Park Place boasts an extensive Happy Hour from noon until 7pm and you can mingle with the locals on their outdoor patio.

If you are looking to escape the harsh winter but avoid the crowds of other beach cities, then Jacksonville is a great option. The city provides a variety of indoor and outdoor activities for every budget. River City Pride will take place in November, so there is more than enough time to make your Jacksonville pride plans.

Enjoy the Journey! ▮

One Of Our Heroes
ILA BORDERS

BY AURORA SMITH

Photo by Sophia Hantzes

Ila Borders is not your average athlete, nor is she your average human.

"I had a different dream," Borders says. "I can remember when I was 5 years old that I wanted to play men's professional baseball."

Not softball. Baseball.

And in 1995, she made it happen. She was the first woman to start as pitcher in a men's collegiate baseball game. But it started much earlier than that.

The Start of the Dream

Not one for dolls, Borders grew up interested in sports, especially baseball.

"I had a ton of energy, I always had a bat and a ball in my hand and I was constantly throwing it around," she says. She started playing at just five years old.

Her mother and father were supportive of her dream, taking her to see baseball games and never telling her she couldn't play with the boys.

She remembers being ten years old and going to a Dodgers game with her dad. She saw Dusty Rogers hit a home run and remembers looking up at her dad and saying, "Dad, this is what I want to do."

Unfortunately, the world didn't agree.

Challenging the Status Quo

"Every place I went to was difficult," Borders says. She recalls a time at ten years old when she went with her mother to sign up for Little League baseball. There was a huge line and at one point, one of the volunteers tried to direct them to the softball sign ups instead.

Borders' mother insisted she wanted to play baseball, not softball. "The lady lied to us, told us to come back the next day for baseball sign ups," says Borders. "We came back the next day and no one was there."

It took two weeks on the waiting list before the baseball coach finally called to let Borders try out. She promptly struck out all the boys and hit a home run, "just annihilated everybody out there," Borders laughs.

All other photos courtesy of Ila Borders

They let her join the team.

High school presented new challenges, both athletically and personally. Borders had to pay her own way to attend a private school just to be allowed to play baseball, which she did all four years of her schooling. And around high school, boys started to ask her out.

Borders has known from a very young age that she was gay, so getting asked out on dates by boys was not something she wanted.

"And so I would hide, I would absolutely hide during lunch. I just didn't want to be asked out. I knew at that time I liked girls but I couldn't date them," Borders says. Her private Catholic school wouldn't have allowed it.

College brought the same challenges, though she did play baseball all four years, which is when she became the first woman to start as pitcher in a men's collegiate baseball game.

Going Pro

After college, Borders was able to play professional baseball with the men, but she still couldn't date women.

"I was told if I came out, I could no longer play baseball," she says. She wanted to sign with the Cincinnati Reds but there was too much media publicity surrounding her and her career to risk it. Instead, she signed with the Minnesota team the St. Paul Saints and played her first regular season game in 1997.

As a California girl, Borders says one of the most striking things for her was experiencing the Midwest.

"I went out to Minnesota and when I played for the Saints, the people

were so nice to me. I've never experienced that before." She says "I went from people saying they don't want me to play baseball but then when I went to play pro baseball in St. Paul, they welcomed me with open arms."

But the inability to publicly be herself was taking its toll. She had a horrible feeling she was lying to everyone. "I couldn't be who I was, I just wanted to be out," she says.

Despite the personal pressures, Borders played professional baseball for four years. She notes that in addition to the regular pressures her male teammates faced, she had the added stress of people telling her if she messes up, she messes up for all women.

She recalls one game in particular in Fargo, North Dakota where she was the starting pitcher. There was a huge crowd at the game, some fans supportive, but lots yelling at her. The coach was trying his best to get under her skin and intimidate her out of playing.

So she went out there and she pitched and by the 7th inning, her team was up 2-0. "Everybody's tune changed," she says, "In the sense of 'Oh holy crap she can do this. She's good. She's about ready to get a win against us.'"

"That's when it dawned on me—I'm not really going out there and pitching for myself. My purpose from that point on was to change people's minds about women in baseball and women in sports and women in general."

Leaving Baseball

Ultimately, despite her successful career, not being able to be out was too much for Borders.

"It's why I eventually left baseball," she says. "I had to choose between [baseball] or living an authentic life. I felt like I was destroying who I was by keeping it a secret. So I got out of baseball, left that entire world, and came out to family and friends. I felt like I finally had my life."

Instead of baseball, she became a firefighter and paramedic.

"I wanted to get into a profession that presented new challenges daily, was physically active, a part of a team, but also worked independently and was something I could be proud of that served others," Borders says.

But baseball will never fully leave her. She currently coaches in Portland, Oregon; mostly boys and men, but sometimes girls too.

"When I have free time I try to give back," she says. "It's still in my blood." ▮

Photos courtesy of Team Trans Twin Cities

It's Quiet On The Ice

BY BUER CARLIE

"Everyone deserves to play hockey," says Annie Bell. A few moments later they explain how hockey arenas often feel toxic or dangerous to queer communities, underscoring the importance of the league of which they are the president: Team Trans Twin Cities. "We're queer and we're here and we're playing hockey and we're having fun," they grin, "You can join us."

Team Trans Twin Cities, which is the first affiliate team of Team Trans, turned one year old this year. Team Trans Twin Cities operates under the same rules and code of conduct espoused by the original Team Trans, which is based in Boston but is an international league. Team Trans is open to all trans and non-binary hockey lovers – regardless of where they live. The Twin Cities team is an experiment in affiliate teams and has been incredibly successful so far, gaining over one hundred players in the last year. The numbers alone are impressive but the success of Team Trans runs deeper than that.

"Everyone on this team has two things in common," says Maki, "We all like playing hockey and we're all trans." The former shared characteristic is key. Players only need to like to play hockey – in fact, they can join with no experience. "We have players who were Division 1 all the way to people who are just starting out," says Bell. Team Trans navigates skill differences by splitting into "Master Skate" and a second group that Maki coaches. Maki explains: "A lot of our players have the passion to learn and I love coaching. It's a lot of fun to see people learning the game I grew up on."

There are more than 100 players on the team roster and somewhere between thirty to forty of those people consistently show up to practice and play. "Others want to participate but don't play very often. It comes down to schedule and other things," says Bell.

Team Trans Twin Cities plays a lot of intramural games in addition to occasionally traveling out of state for tournaments or playing other leagues in town. "We started to bring in the Women's Hockey Association of Minnesota," says Bell, "There are a few other groups we feel safe enough to play against and we are trying to get some kind of competitive season…it's fun to play against your friends but it can get boring."

The impact of Team Trans has been wide-ranging. "You can see people change along the way: personal growth, hockey growth, career growth," says Bell, "It's been really meaningful for everyone." They pause for a

moment and then continue: "Suicide rates have decreased on our team. The team provides purpose and intent and commitment where people show up for their teammates and themselves."

"Team Trans has been life-saving in more ways than one," says Maki, "It's more than just being able to get back to play hockey. It's great to have the support and community as well." Both Bell and Maki have witnessed the strength of the relationships built within Team Trans. "There's this intangible quality to being able to show up and not having to say many words," says Bell, "We are forging deep and meaningful relationships."

Maki has seen the impact of Team Trans extend to allies who support the team as well. "My brother-in-law and his two partners helped organize and run things," he says, "My spouse's family didn't know anything about the trans community until they came to a game – it gave them the ability to learn more about us."

Maki has hit on something powerful here: giving people the opportunity to share a passion with an unfamiliar community can help bridge divides. Team Trans welcomes these moments, but trans safety and comfort always come first. "We exist in a space we're comfortable in," says Bell, "We have boundaries…People can respect that or not. If they don't, they won't be in our space or our circles."

Happily, most people are inclined to opt for respect if not outright enthusiasm. "We had 500 people show up at our Pride skate. It was the event to go to," says Bell, "The Pride game pushed us into the limelight." In addition to that, Team Trans has built partnerships and sponsorships within the NHL and Team Trans Twin Cities has done the same with the Minnesota Wild.

That is not to say there are no issues – a recent spate of bad faith journalism outed and doxxed a member of the team and there have been instances where even other queer people have made members of the team feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Team Trans emerges seeking one thing above all else: "The biggest thing is to celebrate trans joy," says Maki, "We're a group of people doing something they love and enjoy."

"Exactly," says Bell, "We're not trying to politicize it. It's quiet on the ice for us."

They both pause for a moment and then start laughing.

"It's not that quiet," says Maki.

"There's a lot of trash-talking, actually," says Bell.

Of course, Bell was referring to a different kind of quiet. It is the quiet that comes from focusing so hard on the game that everything else melts away.

When they are not savoring the quiet of the ice, Bell is working on a set of ambitious goals for the future of the league. Many of these goals are in motion, including an upcoming trip to the Carnegie Initiative, where they will advocate for trans inclusivity in hockey alongside one of the co-founders of Team Trans.

"We're going to continue to grow," Bell says, "We want more public-facing games and to build a primary winter season," they say, "but we [need] the support of our queer communities."

There are plenty of ways to support Team Trans, from buying merch from the link below to donating money or gear to attending their upcoming showcase at the Xcel Energy Center on January 31st from 7:30-8:30. Admission is free with a suggested $10 donation. "It's not very often that we get invited to skate – especially at a venue like this one," says Bell, "We're excited to showcase some trans joy."

The opportunities to help extend past the game. "We are looking for people who want to advocate and support us in other ways – people who want to run the clocks or run events. We could also use exterior support – sponsoring skate clinics that will help grow and develop our team."

Team Trans is doing something quietly revolutionary. It is giving trans and non-binary people a safe space to be athletes. It is giving trans and non-binary people the chance to play and build relationships and find joy with people who implicitly understand what they are going through. "There's more to this than standard support groups," says Maki, "We understand where you're coming from. We've all been there." Bell nods, "We're doing something that makes us happy and human."

Team Trans continues to build a community of trans and non-binary hockey players. As we closed our call Maki extended the invite to all our trans and non-binary readers: "If you want to do something physically active, if you grew up in Minnesota, if you love hockey – come find your community." ▮

Merch: https://teamlocker.squadlocker.com/#/lockers/team-trans-tc
Website: https://teamtranstc.org
Email: teamtranstc@gmail.com

Photos courtesy of Stonewall Sports Twin Cities

"Holding Court"

Stonewall Sports Twin Cities Swears The Best Thing To Do With A Ball Is Pickle It

BY TERRANCE GRIEP

If you were to find yourself, upon waking from a sleepwalk, softly aiming your dink toward your neighbor's kitchen, you might think that you were re-living that one weekend misspent with Juan-or-José-or-maybe-Dirk in that one Tijuana timeshare during that one spring break, and, come to think of it, you might well be doing just that, bu-ut…alternately, by softly aiming your dink toward your neighbor's kitchen, you might also be engaged in that grand expression of athletic relativism known as pickleball.

Pickleball is "a fun sport enjoyed by all ages and skill levels," according to the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. More specifically, you might think of pickleball as tennis on heavy doses of lithium…or volleyball on Valium plus rackets, minus socks, heavy on the volley and light on the ball.

Ultimately, it's probably most accurate to think of pickleball as an economy-sized game of ping-pong where the players actually stand on the table while ratcheting with rackets, exchanging lobs and drives and dinks–strategic shots strategically aimed at an opponent's No Volley Zone, sometimes known as the kitchen. Where defining pickleball is concerned, perhaps the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board puts it best: "The game combines elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong and can be played indoors or outdoors on a badminton-sized hard surface court."

What the game is, is one thing…how it's played is something else. As the Park & Recreation Board puts it, "[Pickleball] involves players using a paddle to hit a plastic ball with holes over a net in singles or doubles play." Yes, you read that right–offense and defense are perpetrated by hitting the ball over a horizontal net with a paddle and not with a fermented cucumber.

Despite this bit of flagrantly false representation, pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in the United States, as measured by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (who use membership fees to keep track of such things). Beginning its official existence in 1965 as a kids' game plied within the backyards of Washington state, pickleball's current popularity is mostly attributed its anyone-can-play inclusiveness.

This notion lines quite neatly with mission of Stonewall Sports Twin Cities, a community-based athletic league whose mission is "to bring our LGBTQ+ community and allies together to create a fun, inclusive environment through recreational sports and social activities, and work toward positive change for each other and those in need."

It might be that the local chapter of Stonewall Sports recently chose pickleball as its newest sport…or it might be that pickleball chose Stonewall Sports Twin Cities. "Pickleball started when [Stonewall Sports Twin Cities Board member] Thu Danh came to the board during one of its monthly meetings to discuss adding it as our sixth sport," recounts Cameron Bartch, the Communications and Marketing Director for Stonewall Sports Twin Cit-

ies. "At the time of his suggestion, it was becoming wildly popular across the country."

The Stonewall Sports Twin Cities' website elucidates: "This sport has increased in popularity over the pandemic and decided this would be the next greatest addition for Stonewall." The Twin Cities proved a microcosm of this national trend. Its first local season began in the Summer of 2022, which, as remembered by Bartch, "helped our inaugural season set to ninety-six people and our winter season grew to 140 players."

Last summer's contests took place in North Minneapolis's Lucky Shots Pickleball Club. This venue hosted games that were categorized as Social and Competitive by the league (and, respectively, Pretend and Real by Competitive players). Observes Bartch, "Pickleball definitely has been a popular addition to our organization, and we see it continuing to grow in the future."

Speaking of that future, pickleballs don't grow on trees, so sponsors serve a vital function. "For businesses, we are always looking for more sponsors and expand our partnerships across across the Twin Cities," Bartch declares. "Our Stonewall Sports Twin Cities Sponsorship packages are Silver, Gold, Platinum, and Rainbow."

One such benefactor is Luther Bloomington Subaru whose brand-new support of Stonewall Sports Twin Cities' pickleball program is an extension of larger corporate policy. Notes sales manager Noah Joseph, "Bloomington Subaru strives to create an atmosphere where the principals of our Love Promise are respected and practiced by all colleagues."

The support is, naturally enough, not lost on Stonewall Sports. "We're grateful for Luther Bloomington Subaru interest in supporting a local LGBTQ+ organization as pickleball continues to grow in the Twin Cities," Bartch declares, "We look forward to this partnership."

Something like the back-and-forth of pickleball, the action between sponsor and sponsee is interactive, as described by Joseph: "We want our business to be reflective of our country and our customers – where people of all races, genders and sexual orientation are welcomed and embraced for who they are and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We are eager to serve our colleagues, customers and partners."

The real world nuts-and-bolts notwithstanding, there's something more personal at play for Cameron Bartch who says, "For me, I have met so many lifelong friends from joining Stonewall. It really becomes a family." ∎

Stonewall Sports Twin Cities - Pickleball
leagues.teamlinkt.com/stonewallsportsminneapolis/Pickleball
www.bloomingtonsubaru.com/subaru-love-promise

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LGBTQ Sports Directory

BY LINDA RAINES

Photo courtesy of StonewallSports Twin Cities

The Twin Cities metro is home to a remarkable number of athletes who identify as LGBTQ and Allies. The sports that they participate in are wide-ranging—basketball to broomball to bocce and more—and the teams are all welcoming and inclusive to new members as well as to spectators.

Whether you want to join in as a member of a team or simply cheer on these athletes from the sidelines, here's a listing of what is out there in our community sports scene and where to find out more details about the leagues.

BASKETBALL

Women's Silver Fox Basketball League
Women (age 40+) • Beginners welcome
Website: www.ywcampls.org/leagues-and-rentals/womens-basketball-leagues/

BOCCE

Stonewall Sports – Bocce
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies • Beginners welcome • Bottineau Field Park, Mpls
Twincities.bocce@stonewallsports.org
Website: https://leagues.teamlinkt.com/stonewallsportsminneapolis/Bocce

BOWLING

Paul Bunyan Invitational Bowling Tournament
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies, All are welcome
Message us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/PBItournament/about
Website: www.pbi-mn.com

Twin Cities Pride Bowlers
Co-Ed, All Ages Welcome • LGBTQ and Allies • AMF Southtown Lanes, Bloomington, MN
tcpridebowlers@gmail.com
Website: www.tcpridebowlers.com

Wednesday Rainbow League – Twin Cities
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies • Open & Diverse
wednesdayrainbowleague@gmail.com
Website: www.facebook.com/WednesdayRainbowLeague

BROOMBALL

Minnesota's Women's Broomball Program
Women, Non-Binary
mnwomensbroomballprogram@gmail.com
Website: www.facebook.com/MNWBP/

CORNHOLE

Stonewall Sports – Cornhole
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies • Sociable CiderWerks, Mpls
Twincities.cornhole@stonewallsports.org
Website: https://leagues.teamlinkt.com/stonewallsportsminneapolis/Cornhole

CYCLING

Team Recess
Women, FTWNB
teamrecessmpls@gmail.com
Website: www.teamrecessmpls.com

Red Ribbon Ride
Co-Ed • All experience levels welcome • 150+ mile ride to raise funds for HIV services in Minnesota • August 2023
(612) 822-7946 • ride@aliveness.org
Website: www.give.aliveness.org/event/red-ribbon-ride-2023/e421788

DODGEBALL

Stonewall Sports – Dodgeball
Co-Ed, 21+ • All are welcome • Harold Mezile North Community YMCA
Twincities.dodgeball@stonewallsports.org
Website: https://leagues.teamlinkt.com/stonewallsportsminneapolis/Dodgeball

FLAG FOOTBALL

Minnesota Gay Flag Football League (MNGFFL)
Co-Ed • All are welcome • Logan Park, Mpls
board@mngffl.com
Website: www.mngffl.com

HOCKEY

Team Trans Twin Cities Hockey
Open to Trans/Non-Binary players of any skill level
Website: www.facebook.com/TeamTransTwinCities/?ref=page_internal

Twin Cities Queer Hockey Association
LGBTQ and Allies welcome
Website: www.facebook.com/groups/tcqha

Women's Hockey Association of Minnesota
Women, 18+ • All are welcome
leagueadmin@whamhockey.org
Website: www.whamhockey.org

KICKBALL

Stonewall Sports – Kickball
Co-Ed, age 21+ • LGBTQ • Northeast Athletic Field Park, Mpls
Twincities.kickball@stonewallsports.org
Website: https://leagues.teamlinkt.com/stonewallsportsminneapolis/Kickball

MOTORCYCLING

Dykes on Bikes MPLS
Women
drojasusa@yahoo.com
www.facebook.com/dykesonbikesmpls

Twin City Riders
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies
Website: www.twincityriders.com

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outwoods
Co-Ed • LGBTQ
Website: www.outwoods.org

PICKLEBALL

Stonewall Sports – Pickleball
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies • Lucky Shots Pickleball Club, Mpls
Twincities.pickleball@stonewallsports.org
Website: https://leagues.teamlinkt.com/stonewallsportsminneapolis/Pickleball

QUADBALL

Twin Cities Quadball Club
Co-Ed • All are welcome • Diverse & Inclusive
Website: www.facebook.com/twincitiesqc/ • www.twincitiesqc.com

RODEO

North Star Gay Rodeo Association
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies
Dead Broke Arena, Hugo, MN
Website: www.nsgra.org

ROLLER DERBY

Twin Cities Roller Derby
Co-Ed • All are welcome
Website: www.facebook.com/TwinCitiesRollerDerby/?ref=page_internal

Minnesota Roller Derby
Women, Non-Binary, Gender Expansive people 18+
(320) 634-6674 • info@mnrollerderby.com
Website: www.mnrollerderby.com

North Star Roller Derby
Women
info@northstarrollerderby.com
Website: www.northstarrollerderby.com

RUGBY

Mayhem RFC
Men • LGBTQ and Allies • All experience levels welcome
info@mayhemrugby.org
Website: www.mayhemrugby.org

Metropolis Rugby FC
Men/Women • All ages/skill levels welcome • Diverse & Inclusive
metropolisrugby@gmail.com
Website: www.metropolisrugby.com

Twin Cities Amazons FC
Women • All experience levels welcome • Diverse & Inclusive
info@amazonsrugby.org
Website: www.amazonrugby.org

RUNNING/WALKING

MSP Frontrunners
Running, Walking • All fitness levels welcome
Co-Ed • All inclusive
info@mspfrontrunner.org
Website: www.mspfrontrunners.org

SOCCER

TC Jacks Soccer Club
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies
Website: www.tcjacks.org

Minnesota Gray Ducks Soccer
Men's, Co-Ed, Women's • LGBTQ and Allies
ryan@grayduckssoccer.com
Website: www.grayducks.com

SOFTBALL

Northern Lights Women's Softball League Women
Nlwsl.mn@gmail.com
Website: www.facebook.com/nlwsl.twincities

Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League
Co-Ed, LGBTQ and Allies • Diverse and Inclusive
Website: www.tcgsl.leagueapps.com

SWIMMING

Minnesota Ice Swim Club
Co-Ed • LGBTQ welcoming & inclusive to all
minnesotaiceswim@gmail.com
Website: www.mniceswimclub.com

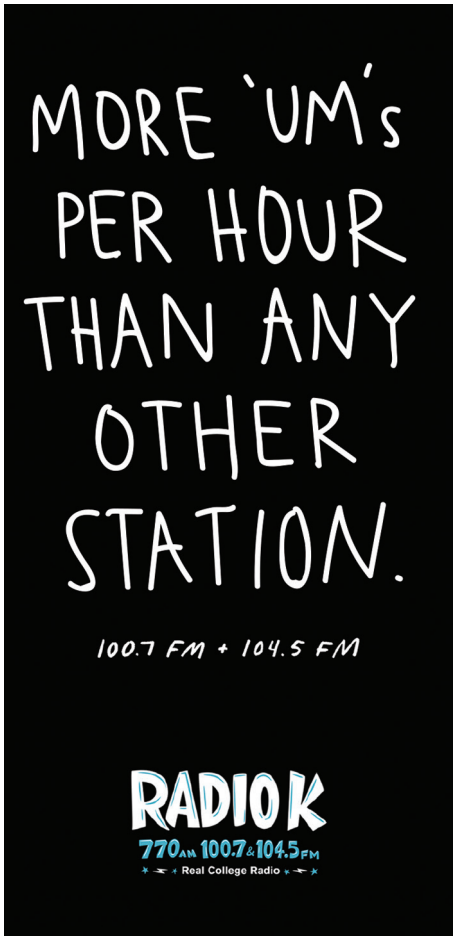
TENNIS

Stonewall Sports – Tennis
Co-Ed • LGBTQ and Allies • InnerCity Tennis, Mpls (Fall/Winter/Spring) and Richfield High School, Richfield, MN (Summer)
Twincities.tennis@stonewallsports.org
Website: https://leagues.teamlinkt.com/stonewallsportsminneapolis/Tennis

VOLLEYBALL

GLASS Volleyball
Co-Ed • All skill levels welcome
Website: www.glassports.org

Gray Ducks Sand and Indoor Volleyball
Co-Ed, LGBTQ and Allies
(651) 317-9262
Website: www.grayducks.com/volleyball



Photos by Minnesota Wild - Bruce Kluckhoh

Dropping The Puck For Our Community

BY RANDY STERN

When the National Hockey League's Minnesota Wild take to the ice on March 7 inside the Xcel Energy Center in Saint Paul, it will mark the return of the club's Pride Night. The Wild will take on the Calgary Flames for a 7:00 PM face off on that Tuesday evening.

Last year, the LGBTQ community showed up in the budling. We were among the "Team of 18,000" representing the "State of Hockey." This year, they're doing it again!

According to Wayne Petersen, Director of Community Relations and Hockey Partnerships at the Minnesota Wild, expect this year's Pride Night to be "very similar to what we did last year."

"One thing that we're very excited about is that the team will be wearing special Pride jerseys again during pre-game warmups," Petersen explained. "They will be using Pride tape on their sticks. It will be a totally new jersey. One thing that we're really excited about and proud about with this jersey is that we have one of these shoulder patches is a tribute to Jack Jablonski."

In fact, the Associate Digital Media Content Specialist for the Los Angeles Kings and Minnesota hockey icon will do the traditional "Let's Play Hockey" call prior to face-off that game. Jablonski will be on hand at the game, traveling from Southern California to celebrate with our community. This will be his first appearance in Minnesota since attending the Quorum's National Coming Out Day Luncheon.

In turn, the Wild organization continues to support Jablonski's foundation.

Also, Petersen stated that the Wild is "in the process of inviting a number of nonprofits that serve the LGBTQ community to have a presence by inviting them to have a concourse table. We're working with Twin Cities Pride right now to identify the groups, but we will have groups on the concourse again. These are all groups chosen in partnership with Twin Cities Pride and all groups that serve the LGBTQ community."

For the March 7 game, a special ticket pack will be available through the Wild's ticketing website. According to Petersen, the ticket pack includes "a Wild branded Pride t-shirt, a pre-game on-ice photo, and a pre-

game gathering. Plus, a portion of each ticket pack purchase will benefit Twin Cities Pride." The Wild's retail outlet, The Hockey Lodge, will have a number of Pride-related items available in time for the March 7 game. They will be available through The Hockey Lodge location at the Xcel Energy Center.

While professional sports organizations will put on Pride Nights to show their commitment for a single game and not do much outside of that evening, the Minnesota Wild organization is among the few sports franchises in the NHL that actually "talk the talk and walk the walk." It is part of the organization's mission and beliefs towards diversity and inclusion within and outside of the Xcel Energy Center.

Peterson adds that the Wild's support for both Team Trans Twin Cities and Twin Cities Queer Hockey Association goes "throughout the year, not just on this night. In fact, we've donated tickets, we've donated suites, and we're even donating ice time to both associations, both leagues."

To firm their commitment to these two LGBTQ hockey clubs, Peterson also stated that both Team Trans Twin Cities and the Twin Cities Queer Hockey Association will "have an hour of ice time at Xcel Energy Center later this month. One team will be skating here on the evening of the 11th, and one team will be skating here on the evening of the 23rd. Then we invite them to join us in June when we march in the Pride Parade, that they are side by side with us in the Pride Parade."

Along with the two LGBTQ hockey clubs, the Wild organization is also committed to their support of Twin Cities Pride. Peterson stated that "it's my responsibility to manage and nurture those relationships. I would've to say I'm most proud of the work that we've done with Twin Cities Pride."

"I'll never forget my first conversation with Dot Belstler," explained Petersen when discussion his connection with the former Executive Director of Twin Cities Pride, "and how far we've come since that first conversation I had with her about three years ago. I'm sure if you talked to her today, even though she's retired and now I work very closely with Andi Otto [the current Executive Director of Twin Cities Pride], that Dot and Andi would both say that we've really come a long way and that we're not just talking to talk, but we're walking the walk with them."

"When we say hockey is for everyone," said Petersen, "we mean it is for everyone. Whether you're black, white, straight, gay, male, female, young, old, we want to grow the game. It's a great game and we want everybody to feel like they're a part of the game and they are welcome."

We are looking forward to a warm welcome inside the Xcel Energy Center on March 7 for the Minnesota Wild's Pride Night. ▮

Photos courtesy of the Guadalajara Tourism Board

Explore Guadalajara, Mexico

Home Of The 2023 Gay Games

BY TODD P. WALKER

Travel has happily returned in full swing following the pandemic, and I for one am fully on board! Recently I was invited to visit the city of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco Mexico. With limited expectations of a city I had never visited and was not particularly familiar with, I went in with a very curious and open mind and left with a sense of excitement and great anticipation for my next visit.

The state of Jalisco has emerged as one of the most progressive states in Mexico when it comes to LGBTQ rights making it an attractive travel destination for LGBTQ visitors. Here are few impressive examples of what makes the city of Guadalajara and the state of Jalisco leaders in the LGBTQ communities.

In December 2018, Jalisco appointed Andrés Treviño to be its Sexual Diversity Director, making Jalisco the only state in Mexico to have this appointed position within the government.

Jalisco is the first and, at the moment, the only state to recognize trans kids and youth rights to their legal identity as a result of Andrés Treviño efforts.

It is one of the few states that has legislation over hate crimes.

Conversion therapy is illegal.

Same-sex marriage is legal.

Guadalajara has one of the largest Pride celebrations in Latin America.

Guadalajara – Co-Host of the 2023 Gay Games with the City of Hong Kong

Should you decide to venture to the pleasant November climate of Guadalajara to experience the excitement of the 2023 Gay Games, here is a bit more information about the games. The Gay Games will take place November 3rd through November 11th in the city of Guadalajara. The Gay Games are held every four years and draw approximately 10,000 athletes from around the world. Athletes will compete in 20 sporting events including diving, swimming, water polo, 5k-10k, marathon and half marathon, track and field, badminton, basketball, beach volleyball, bowling, cheerleading, dance, golf, soccer, softball, tennis, volleyball, wrestling, rugby, skateboarding and powerlifting.

To make transportation for visiting guests more convenient, the city of Guadalajara is developing a transportation card that will include access to the subway, the city bus system and Guadalajara's bike share program. The city of Guadalajara is also working with a telecom company to create a prepaid SIM card for mobile phone usage during the games. Rounding out the sporting events taking place, the Gay Games will also include a cultural component with exhibitions taking place in many of the museums through-out the city.

For more information on the 2023 Gay Games visit gggdl2023.org/en/faqs

Guadalajara ... a Culinary Treasure

One of the many highlights I unveiled during my visit to Guadalajara was discovering what a hidden gem the city is in the Latin America culinary world. Considered by many as a "foodie city to watch", I had been told by my food writing journalist colleagues to be prepared for a delightful dining experience. Well, they certainly weren't wrong. I found just about all of my noshing moments, from fine dining to late night street food, to be splendid and enjoyable. Here are a few of the highlights of my table-hopping food frenzy in Guadalajara.

YUNAITES

Pronounced "Unitas", this spot opened January 2021 in Mercado Centenario by one of Guadalajara's leading chefs, Fabian Delgado. Yunaites is dedicated to traditional Mexican dishes from the region. I ordered the quesadilla with squash blossoms that included the ingredient huitlacoche, which is a type of corn fungus. The presentation was beautiful as the bright yellow squash blossoms jetted out of the quesadilla, making for a floral fresh appearance. Very reasonably priced, this casual dining spot is worth visiting for breakfast or lunch.

LA POSTRERIA

La Postreria has been a local favorite since 2013, known for the beautiful esthetic of its dishes, particularly its desserts. The eatery offers visitors the chance to participate in cooking classes that highlight La Postreria's signature dishes. I had a cup of their tomato basil soup, along with a delicious grilled cheese sandwich saving room for dessert, which was exquisite. I ordered the "Caramella" - and an assortment sampling of their "Macaroons"...every bite was a treasure to remember.

www.lapostreriamx.com

ASA LUNA

Asa Luna is located in the heart of Tlaquepaque. The stunning décor can only be trumped by the outstanding service and the amazing selection of elevated Mexican dishes. I ordered the Cazuela cocktail, one of Guadalajara's signature drinks that is a cross between a sangria and a margarita. The ingredients of the Cazuela includes a mixture of fresh squeezed orange, lemon and grapefruit juices mixed with grenadine and tequila, and topped off with Fresca poured over ice with a salted rim and lime, served in a terra cotta pot. Moderate to Expensive / Great Atmosphere.

www.facebook.com/CasaLunaRest

Day Tours to Consider When Visiting Guadalajara

TLAQUEPAQUE TOUR

Tlaquepaque, designated a "Magical Town" as deemed by the Mexico Secretariat of Tourism. "Magical Towns" are noted for their natural beauty, cultural richness, traditions, folklore, historical relevance, and great hospitality. The town is best known for its high-quality craftsmanship and the art scene that fills up the showrooms and the marketplace throughout the town. Well-known artists and sculptors like Sergio Bustamante have galleries in the area. Take time to stroll the marketplace admiring the vibrant colors of the promenade while popping in and out of the galleries, gift shops, bakeries, candy stores and small restaurants, perhaps relaxing while doing a little people watching sipping a topo chico or an adult beverage.

GUADALAJARA HISTORIC CITY CENTER TOUR

Enjoy a walking historic city center tour to explore the architecturally impressive landmarks dominating the skyline, including that of UNESCO World Heritage Site Museo Cabañas and the golden-hued Palacio de Gobierno, both with stunning murals by Jose Clemente Orozco. Orozco is one of the most famous painters in Mexico, known for his elaborate murals that he completed with the use of only one hand and with sight in only one eye.

HEAD TO THE TOWN OF TEQUILA

On the drive to Tequila, you will see greenish blue fields of agave that stretch over rugged, hilly terrain. This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and part of Mexico's identity. Jalisco is the birthplace of tequila where the world's tequila is produced. A smaller percentage of tequila is also produced in parts of the neighboring states of Guanajuato, Nayarit, Michoacan, and Tamaulipas. Once you arrive in the town of Tequilla, take a moment to learn about how agave is harvested to make tequila, a craft that is still done entirely by hand and has remained unchanged since the 1600's. A master jimador – agave farmer – is often available to provide a harvesting demonstration while showing you the tools of the trade. ∎

Senior Sports in the LGBTQ Community

A Real Home Run

BY SUSAN SWAVELY

It might seem like a daunting thing: keeping up an active lifestyle as you age, but the truth is, nothing is better for your body and mind than staying active! It also helps when your exercise is found within a close-knit, loving community like the Master's division of the Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League, a long running LGBTQ sports league. Three players for the TCGSL, Dennis Cunningham, Bruce Lorentz, and John Hansen, spoke about their experiences with softball, their identities, playing sports as you age, and community.

Cunningham, pitcher and first base, says that the Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League influenced his life because "the league is about people playing softball with their friends, no matter the skill level… I feel being an older LGBTQ athlete is really fun. We still are competitive and having fun. That is what is most important to me." Having fun while exercising can make a world of difference. Showing up for your teammates makes showing up for yourself easier, and can make it more rewarding to keep you moving your body. Hansen, who plays mostly infield, says "Being 50 and playing softball brings a very different lens. It has moved from a focus on winning to [a focus on] camaraderie, community, and fun. I used to be so focused on winning, and while that hasn't gone completely away, age has shown that the ability to be my true self and help others be the same is far more important."

Shifting your perspective from one of solely competition to one of solidarity and friendship is a beautiful insight that comes with experience and age: and one that people of all ages can learn from. Community can be hard to find, and, like Hansen says, "Community is a large part of the human experience. Some have church, clubs, or family gatherings. I have softball. They are my community."

Community is crucial to humanity. Lorentz, who plays left field and usually leads off for batting, says "Our softball league, Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League, is AMAZING! We are one of the biggest leagues in the nation and have some great athletes in the league… I'm not sure where I'd be if I didn't have my softball friends." Lorentz has an amazing track record of supporting his teammates, and knows that

Photos courtesy of Dennis Cunningham

Continue on page 34

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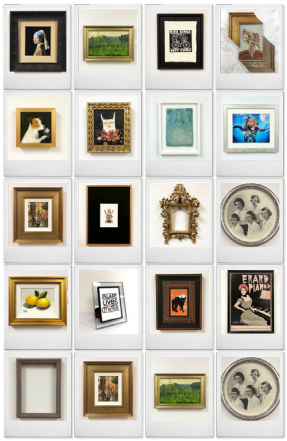

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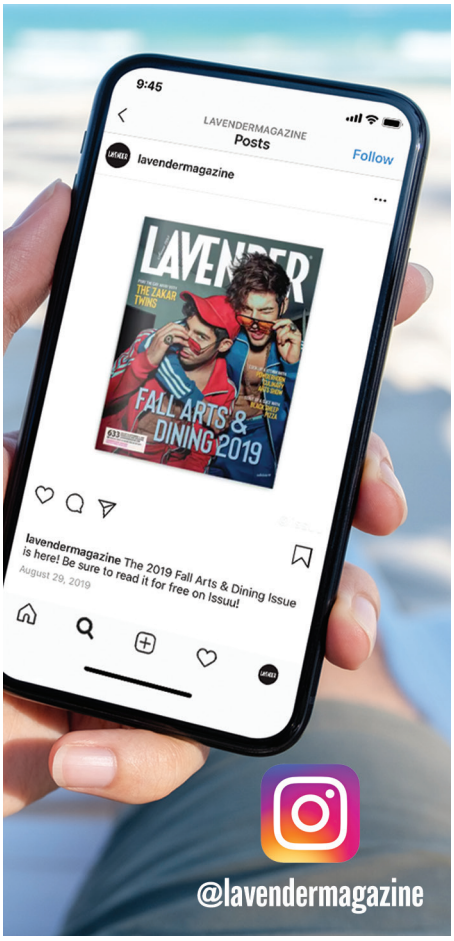

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dedication and community go hand-in-hand. He casually notes that he has "been in the league for over 10 years and [has] only missed one game due to a family obligation."

Softball itself creates a great sense of community, but importantly, the Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League was created by and for LGBTQ athletes, always with an open door to allies. Hansen says "Being a gay man and competing with other LGBTQ athletes has been and continues to be incredibly empowering. As many of us did, I grew up being told people like me weren't capable of numerous things including sports. Time has proved nothing could be further from the truth, and each of us are capable of things far greater than we believe."

Harmful stereotypes about queerness and sports have often kept LGBTQ people, especially gay men, off of the field, which is why leagues like the TCGSL are so essential. Cunningham says "It is really important to have these leagues because it supplies a safe place for LGBTQIA people to enjoy sports and meet new people." Especially for older athletes, growing up gay on a mostly straight, cisgender sports team might have been mentally challenging, or in some cases, an impossibility, and while we are making strides as a society to create a world that is more inclusive, having these safe spaces is still so necessary to the health, both physical and emotional, of LGBTQ athletes.

Hansen shares a beautiful beginning to his softball journey: "I started playing in 1999 as a shy closeted young man searching for myself. When I joined, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had built up all of these crazy images and was terrified. Luckily, I took that chance. The team I joined was a group of older players that were kind, welcoming and had been on that same journey for many years. I had found my tribe and found myself. It filled a large void in my life." Lorentz says it best: having this experience on the TCGSL for as long as he has, "means growth in the gay community, and it gives others the sense of belonging when they are on a team."

Aside from the importance of community, playing sports at an older age is imperative for your physical health. Numerous studies have shown that aging adults who engage in sports or regular physical activity lead healthier lives, contract fewer illnesses, have fewer heart and lung issues, and are even less likely to develop Alzheimer's. Lorentz comments that playing softball, "helps in keeping [his] 'older' joints mobile and flexible." Cunningham also says that in addition to softball, he does "some type of exercise, from weights to yoga, at least 6-7 times a week," and adds "My fitness journey has been lifelong. I have had hip replacement, so it is important for me to stay active." It's never too late to join a sports team and stay active. Being able to find community and a healthy way to move your body are two of the most important parts of aging happily, and thankfully for queer community in the Twin Cities, both can be found in the Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League. ∎

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